

# THE CONTINUING EDUCATION COORDINATOR'S ***BULLETIN***

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INFORMATION AND IDEAS FROM THE INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE CLINICAL SUPPORT CENTER  
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## "IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME"

*As the CE coordinator of your service unit, you have been asked to put together a multi-disciplinary conference on "Health Promotion and Disease Prevention." The need for this meeting is well documented by the following: the disappointing results of QA audits on carrying out prevention guidelines, a request from administration to participate in Area and IHS headquarters emphasis campaigns on prevention, and requests from the providers themselves. You and the rest of the planning committee decide that the best way to address this subject is to target the whole health team, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and community members. After much hard work planning and getting ready for the course, the big day arrives. Much to your disappointment, no physicians or pharmacists attend. You can't understand this, because it is important that the whole team faces this issue together, and, after all, this is good CE. . . .*

Too often we have seen this happen. Just because one profession or another **ought** to attend your meeting, that doesn't assure that they will. Don't assume that just because something is "good continuing education," or because it is important that they be there, they will come. There are, however, nine steps you might take to improve the odds.

- Ask at least one representative from each profession you are targeting to

be an active participant in the planning process. If they take part in identifying the needs, selecting the topics, choosing the speakers, and so on, not only will they share some of your workload, but they will have a sense of ownership and know that the course is designed for them.

- Include each targeted profession on the faculty. Health professionals are more inclined to attend if their peers are part of the teaching staff.
- Early in the planning process, get the support of your administrators. Persuade them that it is important, for example, that physicians attend. If the administration is convinced, ask them to support closure of the clinics during the meeting so that physicians are available to attend. Ask your Clinical Director to encourage them to attend.
- Eliminate conflicts. Be sure that other committee meetings, educational events, administrative matters, and so on are not scheduled at the same time.
- Consider separate tracks for different professions. Especially for larger meetings, plenary sessions for the entire audience may be mixed with sessions broken into separate workshops for each profession. Sometimes a speaker can give a talk

geared for one group and follow it with another, similar talk geared for a different group. Rather than sprinkling topics of interest to a given profession throughout the meeting, schedule all of those on a certain day so that members of that profession may be encouraged to attend the part of the meeting that is most valuable to them.

- Write specific objectives for each profession. If pharmacists, for example, see that a meeting on Diabetes Mellitus will address pharmacologic principles and therapeutic modalities, they may be convinced that there is something in it for them. Sometimes, broad, all-encompassing objectives are too vague to interest any one group. There is no reason why there can't be separate objectives for different target audiences. If you do choose to write a single set of objectives for a broad audience, be sure that they show how the activity will be useful to all participants.
- Offer specific continuing education credit for each targeted profession. This lets them know that they are the intended audience, and lends the imprimatur of quality that goes along with approval by that profession's continuing education accreditation organization.
- Ask the professionals you want to attend if they are planning to do so. If they aren't, find out why and what you can do about it.
- Use promotional materials to "market" your meeting. Announcements and publicity do a lot more than inform people when something will take place. State clearly for whom the meeting is intended (rather than

saying "health care providers," say "physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and physical therapists"). Be sure that there are objectives in the publicity that are appropriate for each profession you are inviting, and make them intriguing or provocative so that they will want to attend. Include information about continuing education credit that will be awarded.

## THE BOTTOM LINE . . .

Health care professionals have many opportunities for continuing education competing for their attention, and too little time available to participate in all of them. Simply designing an educational activity that is "good" and that they "should attend" may not get them there. You need to involve all members of the target audience in the planning of your activity, arrange it so that they are able to get away, and then make them see why they should want to attend. Not only will this help assure that they will come, but it will lead to an activity that meets the learning needs of everyone you are trying to reach.

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